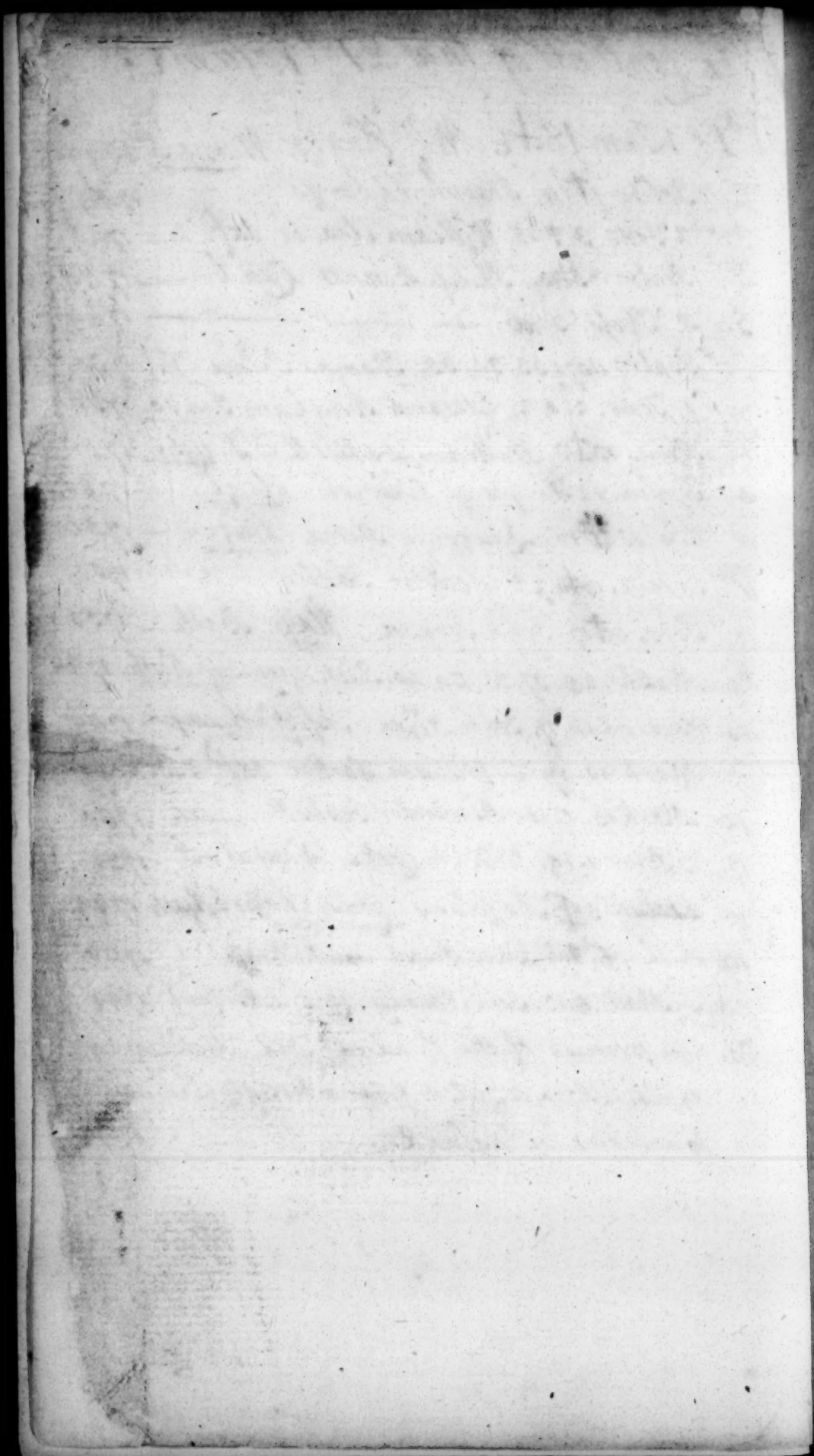


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225 421 No 1
The Efficacy and Importance
of MUSICK.

A
S E R M O N
Preach'd in the
CATHEDRAL-CHURCH
OF
WORCESTER,

AT THE
Annual Meeting of the Three Choirs,
Worcester, Gloucester and Hereford,
Wednesday, Septempler 13, 1749.

Publish'd at the Request of a considerable
Part of the AUDIENCE.

By *WILLIAM HUGHES*, M. A. K
Minor Canon of the Cathedral-Church of
Worcester.

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THE
P R E F A C E.

*A*S every one must be
sensible, that it re-
quires a great Share of
Knowledge to add any thing
of real Consequence to the
REPUBLICK OF LETTERS,
(especially in the present
curious

curious and discerning Age) it may possibly carry with it an Air of Presumption, to pretend to obtrude the following mean Performance upon the Publick, when Men of the most approv'd Parts and Learning, have already done known justice, to this, as well as other Topics. But, instead of tiring the Reader with any further Apology, I shall only desire him to peruse it with a proper degree of Candour. If there are no very

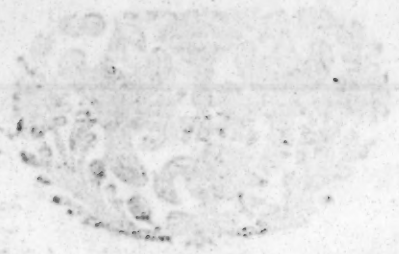
mate-

material Mistakes, it is possible, that some few Inaccuracies may be pass'd over with a favourable, and friendly Eye.



[vii]

material is not
that the same
may be said to
be a fact, and
the same



I SAM. xviii.

Part of the 6th Verse.

*And they came to meet King
Saul, with Tabrets, with
Joy, and with Instruments
of Musick.*

THAT the Knowledge
and Practice of every
useful Art and Science,
have an apparent Ten-
dency, to open and enlarge the
growing Faculties of the Mind,
and to raise them to a natural
Pitch of Lustre, and Dignity;
That the wisest in all Ages, those
who have discover'd the greatest
Strength and Compass of Reason,
have often insisted upon their Im-
portance, is a Truth, which has
long since had the general, and
B united

united Voice of Mankind. If then we would consider Man in the most advantageous Point in View, we must reflect, that as the sovereign Disposer of all things has endow'd his Nature with an active and intelligent Principle, (and consequently form'd for great and noble Improvements) it is his natural and immediate Duty, not to rest contented with every low, and imperfect Attainment, but, on the contrary, to be carried on with a sort of restless Impatience, for future, and more enlarg'd Discoveries.

There are few (it is to be presum'd) of so irregular, and unciviliz'd a Cast, but must be sensible, that the Advantages we receive from an Application to any useful Part of Literature are great; and how much soever some may misapply their Talents, or persevere

severe in a Course inconsistent with the Prospect, or Notion, of any laudable Attainment; yet they must esteem those, who have sufficiently distinguish'd themselves for some ingenious or useful Performance, and thereby entitl'd to the Esteem, and Approbation of Mankind.

But then it is still to be remark'd, that the same wise and gracious Author has variously dispos'd the Inclinations of Men, and fitted Variety of Objects to their several Talents; and, though we meet with some happy Geniuses, who are capable of making great Advancements in various Branches of Learning, yet in most there is a sort of Master-Affection, which determines them to one fix'd Point, and engages the greatest Part, if not the whole of their Attention: And, though the Mind may be variously dispos'd at some particu-

lar Seasons, and diverted from its more natural Course, though it may be lost amidst too great a Multiplicity of Pursuits, and distracted as it were in its Choice; yet there will be a Time, when it will fix and determine, in favour of that, which Nature has taught to approve.

This is an Observation, which has been so often confirm'd, and illustrated, that to enter into any particular Discussion, must be wholly foreign to my present intended Purpose; and therefore (without any further Digression) shall hasten to show,

1st, The grateful Efficacy of Musick :

2dly, The Reasonableness and Importance of it :

3dly, I shall conclude with
the Nature and Design of
this Day's Assembly.

But first, I shall show the grate-
ful Efficacy of Musick.

Amidst the great Variety of Sub-
jects which have often employ'd
the ingenious Part of Mankind,
there are few or none, which both
antient, as well as modern Writers,
have dwelt upon with more seem-
ing Pleasure, or express'd them-
selves in more affecting and raptu-
rous Terms, than when they have
been endeavouring to set forth and
describe, those grateful Effects,
which have often been observ'd to
arise from the Power and Efficacy
of Harmony, which have been im-
mediately consequent upon that
pleasing Science, Musick.

Both

Both Prose, as well as Poetick Writers, have done singular Justice to the Subject, and have very beautifully remark'd, that the Powers of Melody charm and lift us above ourselves; that they often move, and affect the very inmost Recesses of the Soul. Such is the prevailing Efficacy of Musick; so irresistibly persuasive is that favourite Science, that when our Passions and Affections are address'd with the sweet Mixture of Cadence and Concord, we are fill'd with Admiration before we are aware, and feel a sudden secret Pleasure too great to be express'd.

This is a Character so peculiar to Musick, that it will be found difficult to have the same Observation so strongly verified in any other Art or Science, so much as in that of Musick.

If

If we consider the Nature of other Arts and Sciences, it will appear beyond the Reach of a just Exception, that some previous Knowledge will be found absolutely requisite, in order to relish their respective Beauties. But, with regard to the Powers of Melody, the Case, (if I am not mistaken) seems to be extremely different. These, with a sort of resistless Power, with an arbitrary Sway, as it were, affect the yet uninstructed Faculties, and make very deep, and sensible Impressions, upon the most ignorant, and unskilful Hearers.

In Musick therefore, it is not wholly necessary that every one should be well conversant with the Rules and Laws of Composition, or be well vers'd in the Nature and Properties of Concord

and Discord. These Speculations (says an anonymous Author *) I abandon to the sage Theorists, which are only like the nice grammatical Parts of a Discourse, whose Merits I can feel, without entering into the Discussion.

To pretend to explain, in a nice and critical Manner, how mere Sound should thus operate upon the Faculties of the Soul, or how to account for that Sensation and Reflection, whereby we judge and perceive either harmonious, or discordant Tones, is a Secret as yet wholly unknown; a Phænomenon in Nature, which has long since baffl'd the Search of the most Curious and Inquisitive. And if we proceed to consider even the theoretick Part of Musick, or that which more particularly treats of the Properties of Concords and Discords, there

* Tract upon Musick.

there will be found Difficulties here, which the most accomplish'd Theorist has not yet sufficiently explain'd : Though it is a general receiv'd Opinion, that the Moderns have made more ample Discoveries in this Particular than those of the Antients.

But, instead of entering into any such nice, and philosophical Disquisitions, which may possibly serve more to amuse, than to afford any real Matter of Instruction, it will be acting a more prudent part, to rest contented with well-known Experience with regard to the Powers of Melody, and to observe, that the Mind, is often affected with the Concord of sweet Sounds ; and though there is no real or satisfactory Account to be given, or any adequate Cause to be assign'd, for such a Procedure of the Mind, yet every

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Day's

Day's Observation will satisfy us of the Truth of the Assertion.

Some there are indeed, who seem to be form'd in such a manner, that they are so far from relishing the Beauties of Harmony, that the most finish'd musical Composition, or in the * Poet's Phrase; the most artful, unimaginable Touches, are to them unmeaning and lifeless, and leave no sort of Impression behind them.

Far be it from me to cast the least injurious Reflection upon those, whom Nature has denied the Pleasure, of relishing the engaging Measures, either of a *Handel* †, or a *Purcel*.

* *Milton*.

† To do justice in all respects to the Character of Mr. *Handel*, who has open'd such uncommon Scenes of Delight, who in the greatest Variety of Instances has long since prov'd himself the most perfect Master of Harmony that any Age ever produc'd, would rather

Purcel. My more natural and becoming Province must be to vindicate and assert the Cause of Musick, to rescue it from any unjust Reproach, and to insist upon the real and undoubted Importance of that noble, and exalted Science.

Few Arts and Sciences (as it has often appear'd to a very unhappy degree of Certainty) but have had those who have endeavour'd, at some time or other, to lessen them in the Esteem of Mankind, and to set them forth in a disadvantageous, and reproachful Light. This will always be the Case, as long as there are such in the World, who have little or no Relish for those refin'd and mental Sensations, which are ever peculiar to Beings of an intelligent Rank and Order, and in the Perception of which, the

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rather require a Volume, than this poor, and imperfect Sketch.

Honour and Dignity of the moral Structure more particularly consist.

In the Estimate of * such, it is little Matter of Wonder, that every pleasing Art should meet with equal Reception, or that every valuable Science should be equally dishonour'd or reproach'd.

But we proceed, in the second Place, to consider the Reasonableness and Importance of Musick.

The

* The human Understanding exerting itself vigorously, throws off by its own Force its Regard for, and Connection with the Body; it discovers that those Pleasures which are adapted to the one, are in some measure inconsistent with the other; that the Joys of the Senses are short, violent, and afford no Satisfaction on Reflection; whereas those of the Mind are mild, solid, and permanent in their Nature. Yet a little Consideration renders it very evident, that the infinite Wisdom of the Creator is alike conspicuous in both: It is not that sensual Pleasures are wrong in themselves, for they are admirably suited to the animal Nature, and are absolutely necessary to the Continuance of Mankind, *Discour. upon Prov.*

The universal Reception, which the Knowledge of Musick has met with in the more early Ages of the World, the great Regard which the most polite and finish'd Nations have always paid to its Professors, must greatly tend to raise our Esteem of it, as a Science of no mean, and inconsiderable Importance. If then we would pay the least Respect to the valuable Remains of Antiquity, or esteem the Precepts of those Sages, who were formerly Men of Renown, we shall soon find, that Musick was very strongly recommended to the Practice of those who were otherwise remarkable for great and uncommon Accomplishments, and that some of the most complete Scholars have not thought it below their Observation and Notice: The *Roman* Orator informs us, that the People of antient *Greece* had

had so singular a Regard for Music, that some Knowledge at least of that Science, was look'd upon as a grand Requisite, to form and compleat the Character of a Person, of the greatest Rank, and Fortune.

We read of one *, who in many respects was look'd upon as a very remarkable Personage, whose singular Improvements in various Branches of Learning, very justly excited the Admiration of the World; yet, his great Want of Knowledge in this Science, serv'd greatly to lessen his Esteem, and to sully the Brightness even of so great, and exalted a Character: For which Reason, we find him greatly tax'd, for being deficient in this useful, and necessary Accomplishment.

It

* *Themistocles.*

It is remark'd by a * Writer upon this Subject, that some of the best Philosophers look'd upon Musick, as a peculiar Gift and Favour of Heaven, as being necessary to raise the Mind to a more sublime and exalted Pitch: And the Antients (as the same Author proceeds to observe) esteem'd those who had no Genius for it, wholly stupid and senseless, whose Frame was disorder'd, and the Elements of their Composition at War amongst themselves: A Man (says *Plutarch*) who has learnt Musick from his Infancy, can never miss having a Taste for what is good, and consequently a Hatred of what is bad, even in Things that belong not to Musick; he'll never dishonour himself by any Meanness, he'll be useful to his Country, careful in
private

* *Banner.*

private Life, all his Actions and Words will be discreet, and deserving the Character of Decency, Moderation and Order.

Why therefore should we suspend our Judgment, or presume to doubt of the real Importance of Musick, when it has receiv'd this high, and deserv'd Encomium, from so great, and masterly a Hand?

To enumerate all the particular Instances which might be produc'd, for the Illustration of a Point, already discuss'd by many able Writers, would only serve to carry me beyond the Bounds, and Purport of this Discourse, and detain this Audience too long; and therefore these few and familiar ones may possibly suffice at this time, to show that the Knowledge and Practice of Musick have been

been held in great Esteem, and the Reception it has met with must enhance the Value of it in the Eye of every cool and dispassionate Reasoner in life.

But I proceed, in the third and last place, to consider the Nature and Design of this Day's Assembly.

There are few or none in this Christian Auditory, who, in a serious Hour of Reflection, but must entertain great Notions of those WORTHIES, who at first were principally concern'd in this great and momentous Affair, who were the sole Authors and Contrivers of this great and extensive Act: An Act, which must make their Names greatly esteem'd, cordially revered, which must derive the greatest and most lasting Honour upon their Characters,
D and

and make them entirely worthy of our future Imitation and Regard.

What therefore those great Benefactors have long since so happily begun for the Good of considerable Numbers, it is our more immediate Duty to enter upon every useful Expedient, to think upon every proper Measure, in order to perpetuate the same to future Generations: For, by the Continuance of this noble and beneficent Design, we are enabled to diffuse, we are impower'd to cheer, and animate the otherwise drooping Spirits of those who would be destitute of this humane, this friendly Assistance.

It must certainly then give us the most rais'd and exalted Notions of that grand Gospel-Duty, Charity, (that Divine and Heavenly

venly Duty) when we consider, *that* the sole End of this Appointment, *that* the only Reason why we resort upon this affecting Occasion: In short, what gives a pleasing and never-failing Sanction to the whole, is, to reflect, that we are here united to succour those who labour under the Weight and Pressure of an adverse Fortune; who, at one time a day, were wholly unacquainted with those Troubles and Misfortunes, which now imbitter their Days, and cast a sad Gloom upon the Remains of an imperfect Life.

With regard to the common Poor, who are enur'd to a constant Series of Hardships, they are not the immediate Objects of this Institution, or the primary Care of its Concern. The Authors of this Design very wisely and affectionately consider'd, that there were

few or none so worthy of the real Regard and Attention of Mankind, as the Widows and Children of those, who were formerly the faithful Ministers of God's holy Word and Sacraments; who, from a regular and constant Supply of every useful Accommodation in Life, are now by the wise and unerring Stroke of Heaven reduc'd to the most piteous Circumstances; and that perhaps in the Eve of Life, when every the least Misfortune has an additional Weight, and scatters a more dismal Ray.

Would you then pay a natural and becoming Regard to the Memory of any worthy Clergyman, who was formerly your chief Pastor and Guide, who in every Instance of Conduct behav'd with the greatest Decency and Propriety? Consider his poor Widow and Children, all in their mournful

ful Attire, all involv'd in Tears, crying and bewailing one to another, with Hearts almost spent out with Grief for their late unspeakable Loss!

This is Distress indeed. Mere Language cannot paint it. Mere Words cannot express it. The Scene is really mournful beyond all human Expression. It is impossible for you to picture such a one in your Imagination without shuddering, as it were, at the most distant Prospect of such Distress.

Would you then pay a Christian Regard to the Memory of any worthy Clergyman, consider his poor distress'd Wife with a numerous Offspring, full of Hurry and Perplexity, full of Fears and Cares, totally bereav'd of their former Comfort and Support. Allow yourself a Moment's Reflection, and

3

you

you must (unless you would stifle every Impulse of Good-Nature) relieve them : If you are a Christian, you must mitigate their Cares, and soften their Distress. If you are a good Man, you'll dry up their Tears, and relieve them with a Godlike Generosity of Soul. *Be the Helper of the Friendless therefore, and make their Hearts that are ready to perish sing for Joy.*

As for You *, you have already acquitted yourselves in the powerful Language of Musick, you have in the most engaging and affecting Strains, (in Strains more particularly suited to this Occasion) endeavour'd all you can to soothe and soften the Mind into Pity and Compassion, and to raise in it every grateful, every worthy Sensation.

It

* This was more particularly address'd to the Vocal and Instrumental Performers.

It is greatly to be hop'd, that you have powerfully pleaded the Cause of the Widow and Orphan, and rais'd a just Sense of their Misery and Want, in every human Breast.

It is greatly to be hop'd, that your Melody has gain'd an easy Access to the Hearts of this Audience, and left no one insensible of the great Cause, in which we are now particularly interested, and engag'd.

And thus have I endeavour'd to acquit myself before this SHINING ASSEMBLY.

If these, and such like Sentiments as these, should in the least avail to promote the Good and Comfort of others, or engage the Heart in favour of the Distress'd
and

and Afflicted ; if there are those who are now more sensible of the real and undoubted Importance of a truly humane and charitable Disposition, it must greatly add to the Satisfaction of any one to reflect, that it had ever been in his Power to accomplish so great and necessary a Work.

To conclude. May all such charitable Institutions as these continue to prosper, and may this Day more particularly be distinguish'd for an extensive and enlarg'd Benevolence.



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